

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 2, 2007

The Honorable Robert Gates
Secretary
Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

The Honorable R. James Nicholson
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Gates and Secretary Nicholson:

As you know, more than 100,000 U.S. troops were exposed to sarin and cyclosarin when an Iraqi depot in Khamisiyah, Iraq was bombed in March 1991. Since that time, troops who served in the Gulf War have reported various health problems, including chronic fatigue, digestive problems and various neurological disorders, at a higher rate than troops who were not deployed to the Gulf.

After years of public denial of the problem, the Department of Defense (DoD) now acknowledges the troop exposure and, together with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), has conducted research on the issue.

We write to you today regarding two recent studies conducted by both of your agencies, together with Boston University. These studies found long term brain damage among troops believed to be exposed at a higher rate to sarin and cyclosarin from the bombing of an arms depot in Khamisiyah, Iraq in March 1991. The studies, titled "Effects of sarin and cyclosarin exposure during the 1991 Gulf War on neurobehavioral functioning in US army veterans" and "Quantitative magnetic resonance brain imaging in US army veterans of the 1991 Gulf War potentially exposed to sarin and cyclosarin," are particularly important because they are the first studies to use DoD exposure data and brain imaging technology. They are also the first studies to find long-term damage resulting from even small amounts of exposure to nerve agents.

These two DoD and VA funded research studies provide comfort to the thousands of Gulf War veterans who have fought for answers and now know that there is a "significant association" between Gulf War illnesses and nerve agent exposure in Khamisiyah, Iraq in 1991.

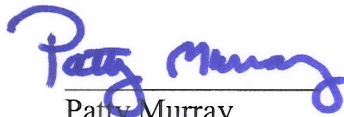
In light of these new and important studies, we believe that the VA and DoD should move forward with more research to find better and more effective treatments for the many thousands of ill Gulf War veterans. We also would request that you move to provide the care and benefits these honorable veterans deserve.

We would like answers to the following questions:

- What are DoD and VA going to do to make sure all Gulf War veterans who were potentially exposed to chemicals while serving in Iraq are aware of this new research?
- What is DoD's and VA's plan to screen these veterans for Gulf War illness?
- How do we ensure that tracking and treating these veterans does not take away resources from other current priorities?
- How many veterans do you project will be eligible for VA healthcare and disability benefits?
- How much money do you expect this will cost?

We look forward to hearing from you in the near future and eagerly anticipate your response.

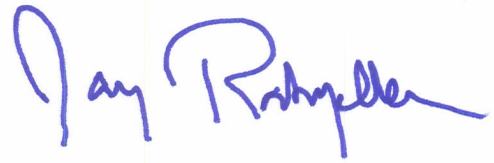
Sincerely,



Patty Murray
U.S. Senator



Kit Bond
U.S. Senator



Jay Rockefeller
U.S. Senator